

which is the lowest classification of offense known to the statutes. I find it offensive that an effort is made to criminalize words. Again, if I were to apply to our law making what we apply in here and how we want to be treated so delicately I wouldn't even have to worry about bills like this. The ones who offer these bills would not want to be treated in accord with the policies they're laying down here for others. They want to be understood. They don't want what they offer to be misconstrued, even when it comes to a bill like this. Although it can clearly be shown the problems that this bill creates and there cannot be a successful argument made by those who support this bill against the things that I've said, they nevertheless want to implore that we understand what their aim is. And even if these bad things happen, that's not their intent. They want the Legislature to buy that and give them that consideration. But even if we don't, we have not criminalized what they have done, but they want to criminalize words from others and we all know that when you're in a confrontational or adversarial relationship with somebody there is going to be a likelihood of misconstruing the words that are spoken, one to the other. People's minds are inflamed. They have no incentive to read nothing more into people's words than a reasonable person would read into those words. They want to place the worst possible construction on what is said and, in some cases, they will even alter the words that were actually spoken when the time comes for them to repeat what was said. So if we want that consideration and we plead on the floor for it, remember last night 'I am not a crook', we want that, but then what do we turn around and do to everybody else by means of the legislation we pass? We don't want laws enacted that do that to us, but look what we are doing. We have the power, as legislators, to put sound policy in place. We have an obligation to avoid putting in place any kind of bill that will harm the rights that are essential to the functioning of a healthy democracy. There is always the talk when our students come down here to listen to us, when we go to schools where they're being taught, there is always the discussion about the need for discussion. A good teacher encourages the students to ask questions, to challenge and express their views. Then we have a set of circumstances where, without a problem being shown that justifies a criminalization of words, the Legislature, as a favor to Senator Hudkins, is going to pass this into law, and you're doing it as a favor. They know it, I know it, and Senator Hudkins is very skillful and I wish I was as skillful along that line as you. I can't get anybody to do anything for